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A  
DECLARATION OF THE VIEWS  
OF THE  
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS  
IN RELATION TO  
CHURCH GOVERNMENT:

By the Meeting for Sufferings of New-England Yearly Meeting.  
Compiled principally from the writings of George Fox,  
Stephen Crisp, Robert Barclay and William Penn.

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## VIEWS ON CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

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*To the Quarterly, Monthly and Preparative Meetings and individual members of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends.*

It is we trust under a feeling of religious concern and in gospel love that we are engaged to address you, and to express our earnest desire for your preservation and growth in the unchangeable truth.— We would thankfully commemorate the name of Him who, for purposes of His wisdom, and by the fresh outpourings of His own Holy Spirit, first called and gathered us as a people, and who hath hitherto been pleased to preserve us—to Him be the praise.

But, dear friends, it is not for us to expect the continuance of this preservation and gracious help unless we abide faithful unto Him—looking unto Him as our Leader, our Bishop, and adorable High Priest, who is Head over all things unto His church.

It was, we believe, by the direct, immediate visitations of His spirit, and by a remarkable manifestation of His power, that our forefathers were led to take that spiritual view of the gospel dispensation, and to sustain it under much persecution, which we doubt not was designed by its author, and embraced by his immediate followers, and the primitive believers; and it is only as we are made partakers of



the same Divine influence and abide under it, as we acknowledge it as they acknowledged it—as we yield unto it even as they did, that we shall be walking faithfully in the footsteps of those who were our predecessors and fathers in the truth. And it is with a view to encourage in faithful dedication and consistent walking as members of our religious Society, that we are now concerned briefly to revive some of the measures that were taken by our early Friends, under the guidance, as we fully believe, of best Wisdom, for the maintenance of right order in the Church, in the establishment of our Christian Discipline, and in the inculcation of that subordination which is due from inferior to superior meetings, and from individual members to the body.

From the history of our Society, it appears that at a very early period, George Fox was actively engaged to promote the establishment of men's and women's meetings for Discipline, and the power and authority in which he was concerned that they should be maintained, may be gathered from the emphatic words often repeated in his Epistles:—"Let all your men's and women's meetings be held in the power of the Lord." And it should be instructively remembered that this concern of George Fox and other Friends for the introduction of a system of Church Discipline, was the cause of much disturbance to some, who claimed for themselves an extent of individual liberty inconsistent with that subordination which is essential to the prosperity of the body. It is thus noticed in the Book of Disci-

pline and Advices of London Yearly Meeting :—  
 “The persevering efforts of George Fox to establish a regular Discipline, a work in which he was assisted by nearly all those who had been instrumental in gathering the Society, proved a great trial of spirits: to a large proportion of the members the arrangements appear to have been quite satisfactory; there was, however, a considerable number of objectors—the self-willed and lawless opposed it with vehemence; and it must be admitted that not a few of a very different class were drawn aside by specious arguments, to oppose what was represented as an encroachment upon individual spiritual liberty. Certain it is that a schism to some extent took place on this occasion; which, however, there is reason to believe, left the Society in a more healthy state than it found it. The general meeting of 1677 issued a strong declaration on the subject. Robert Barclay wrote upon this occasion, his “Anarchy of the Ranters;” William Penn his “Liberty Spiritual,” and Stephen Crisp an excellent tract; all of them endeavoring to prove the necessity of established order and discipline in the Church of Christ. This very conflict, and the close examination to which it led of the true limits of Church authority, tended, there is reason to believe, under Divine direction, to establish the Discipline at once more firmly and safely throughout the Society than might otherwise have been the case.

Thus was a system of order and government, in conformity with the spirit of christianity and the

practice of the primitive Churches, established amongst us in early times; and thus a field was opened for the exercise of the various gifts by which the Church, the body of Christ, is edified. It is very observable in the history of our Society, that the declension or revival of religious zeal has ever been accompanied by a corresponding relaxation or increase of care in the exercise of the Discipline."

Stephen Crisp thus describes the concern he early felt after his conviction and the state of mind he believed necessary in order to the right discharge of his duty to others:—"The more," says he, "I came to feel and perceive the love of God and his goodness to me, the more was I humbled and bowed in my mind to serve him, and to serve the least of his people among whom I walked; and as the word of wisdom begun to spring in me, and the knowledge of God grew, so I became a counsellor of those that were tempted in like manner as I had been; yet was kept so low that I waited to receive counsel daily from God, and from those that were over me in the Lord, and were in Christ before me, against whom I never rebelled, nor was stubborn; but the more I was kept in subjection myself, the more I was enabled to help the weak and feeble ones."

In our weak and erring condition as men and creatures, "it must needs be that offences will come," and among the ends aimed at in the institution of Disciplinary regulations, are the preservation of the individual members of the Society, and the reformation and restoration of offenders, or where this is imprac-

ticable, a separation of them from the body ; that thus the blessed Truth may be preserved from reproach. Our Lord has not left us without directions as to the course to be pursued with such as depart from the right way, and the Discipline of our Society is designed to be, and we believe is, in conformity to these divine instructions. " If," says he, " thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church ; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." And the promise given to the Church in the performance of its duties is calculated to sustain every dependent member. " Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in Heaven ; for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

In order to experience this divine blessing, it is indispensably necessary that we should be really gathered in the name and power of the Lord Jesus, whether for the purpose of Worship or for the transaction of the affairs of the Church, and the necessity of the immediate direction and presence of the one Great Head is essential to the right performance of

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to "feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but ensamples to the flock"—and adds the consolatory assurance that, "when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, they shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Among the provisions of our Discipline which we would now revive, and especially to the consideration of our younger friends, is that in relation to the care that is to be maintained with respect to the Ministry. While the solemn and important service of preaching the gospel is not to be exercised by any, except under the immediate direction and anointing of the Holy Ghost, neither is it to be *judged of*, but by those who have been dipped, in measure, into the same spirit, and have received a qualification therefor from the same source. A disposition to cavil and to criticise, or in any way to speak lightly of the Ministry, is dangerous to him who indulges it, as tending to self-exaltation, and to the lessening of his regard for sacred things, as well as the source from whence they spring. And it is to preserve the right order and harmony of the Church that Elders are appointed, whose delegated duty it is to judge in these matters, and to extend assistance or caution as it is required; and let none, in the forwardness of their spirits, presume to assume to themselves this office, or attempt to exercise its duties.

*The following extracts from the writings of wor-*



thy and experienced Friends, expressive of their concern for the preservation of the Church, we deem pertinent and instructive, and commend them to the careful consideration of all. We commence with some extracts from the advices of George Fox, of whom William Penn testifies that "he was a man that God endowed with a clear and wonderful depth, a discerner of others' spirits, and very much a master of his own."

"Friends, live in the power of the Lord God, and in his truth, light and life, that by it you may all, with one heart and mind, keep dominion and do true judgment and justice, truth and righteousness in all your men and women's meetings without favor or affection, to relations, kindred or acquaintances, or any respect of persons.

For if you do not so, judgment will come on you from God, to put you down from your places. For the power of God, his light and truth, respects not any, but justice, truth, righteousness and equity.

Let mercy overshadow the judgment-seat, and let mercy be mixed with judgment.

Take heed of foolish pity ; and if you be not diligent against all profaneness, sin, iniquity and uncleanness, looseness and debauchery, and that which dishonoreth God, then you let those things come upon you, which you should be atop of and subdue and keep down, with righteousness and the truth and power of God.

And in all your men and women's meetings let *all things* be done in love, which doth edify the

body ; and let nothing be done in strife and vain glory ; but keep in the unity of the spirit, which is the bond of peace ; and let all things be done in the wisdom of God, which is pure and gentle from above, above the earthly, which is sensual and devilish.”—1668.

Now, dear Friends, let there be no strife in your meetings, nor vain janglings, nor disputings, but let all that tends to strife be ended out of your meetings that they may be kept peaceable, so that you may be at peace among yourselves, and the God of peace and love may fill all your hearts ; whose love edifies the church.”—1683.

“Let all your meetings be preserved by the wisdom of God, in the unity of the spirit, the bond of peace, and in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost ;—that, being ordered by the pure, gentle, heavenly, peaceable wisdom, easy to be entreated, they may be holy and virtuous examples to all others. Let all be careful to speak shortly and pertinently to matters, in a christian spirit, and despatch business quickly, and keep out of long debates and heats, and with the help of the spirit of God, keep that down which is doating about questions and strife of words, and tends to parties and contention. In the Church of God, no such custom is to be allowed.—Let not more than one speak at a time, nor any in a fierce way, but as the apostle saith, “Be swift to hear and slow to speak, and let it be in the grace which seasons all words.”

“And if any one should speak or talk any thing out of your Monthly or Quarterly Meetings, to the blemishing or defaming of any person, or of the meeting, such are to be brought to judgment and condemnation; for it breaks the privilege and order of christian society in your meetings; so that all may be kept and preserved in the power of the Lord, and in His spirit in love and unity.”—1669.

“And be it known unto all, we cast out none from among us; for if they go from the light, and spirit and power in which our unity is, they cast out themselves. And it has been our way to admonish them, that they may come to that spirit and light of God which they are gone from, and to come into the unity again. For our fellowship stands in the light that the world hates, and in the spirit which the world grieves, vexes and quenches; and if they will not hear our admonition, as before the light condemns them, and then the testimony of truth goes out against them.”

“And, dear Friends, you who are gathered in the power of the Lord God, which is the authority of your men’s and women’s meetings; in the power of the Lord Jesus, see that all things be well amongst you, and that all walk in the truth, and as becometh the gospel of Christ, and his glorious light and life, so that all may stand up for God’s glory, and be valiant for his truth and grow up in it. Admonish, exhort and encourage such as are young and tender, to keep and preserve them in the way of life; and watch over one another for good.”

“Dear Friends, do all that you do in peace and love and in the fear of God, condescending one unto another in the simplicity and innocency of truth, and in the wisdom of God, that this may be every one’s crown, that nothing may be done in strife to occasion words; for you are called to peace and holiness, in which the kingdom stands, and to serve one another in love.”

“And in the Lord’s power and spirit meet together, and keep your meetings in the name of Jesus Christ, who hath all power in heaven and earth given to him, that you may feel his living and divine presence among you, and in his pure, gentle, heavenly love and wisdom, may be valiant for his name and truth upon the earth. Be not ashamed of Christ your Teacher and Prophet, whom God hath raised up in his new covenant and testament, whom you are to hear; neither be ashamed of Christ your Shepherd, who hath laid down his life for his sheep, whose voice you are to hear, who feedeth his sheep and giveth them life eternal, and none is able to pluck them out of his hand. Neither be ashamed of your High Priest, who hath offered up himself for you and doth sanctify you, who is a Priest made higher than the heavens: neither be ashamed of your Bishop, the Chief Shepherd of your souls, to whom ye are now returned by his grace and truth, who oversees you with his heavenly eye, that you do not go astray from God. In him let your faith stand, who is the author and finisher of it, the Lord Jesus Christ, *who is your Sanctuary*, in whom you have life, *peace, rest and salvation—who is the Amen.*”

That ancient, faithful minister of the gospel, Stephen Crisp, thus speaks of the course pursued by some in his day when the Discipline was introduced and established among Friends:—

“And when some exalted spirits came to see unto what this work would tend, they took offence thereat, and sought to weaken the hands of faithful Friends in this good work, under pretence, that all must be left to the witness of God; and if people did not find judgment in themselves for what they did, they must not be judged by others, being themselves gone from Truth’s judgment and hardened; then they cried out innovation and imposition, and such like.”

“And hereupon were many again seduced and subverted, and drawn away from their steadfastness in the truth, and began to appear against the good order of the Lord’s people, and to reflect upon the godly care that lay upon them, with unhandsome and unsavory speeches and writings, until a secret root of bitterness and enmity got into several that had been convinced. In this root the enemy wrought with great craft and subtlety to draw them from the blessed unity that is in Christ Jesus, the true Head of the true Church, and begat them into many jealousies and groundless fears of an apostacy, while in the meantime he drew *them* so far to apostatize from their first love and first works, that they proceeded to expose Friends, both in particular and in general, to the reproach and scorn of the world, as much as in *them* lay.”

He proceeds to exhort Friends as follows :—

“Let all beware of their own spirits and natural tempers, and keep in a gracious temper, then ye are fit for the service of the house of God, whose house ye are, as ye keep upon the foundation that God hath laid, and he will build you up and teach you how to build up one another in him. As every member must feel life in himself, and all from one head, this life will not hurt itself in any, but be tender of the life in all ; for by this one life of the word, ye were begotten, and by it ye are nourished, and made to grow into your several services in the Church of God. It is no man’s learning or artificial acquirements ; it is no man’s riches or greatness in this world ; it is no man’s eloquence and natural wisdom, that makes him fit for government in the Church of Christ ; all his endowments must be seasoned with the heavenly salt, and his spirit subjected, and his gifts pass through the fire of God’s altar, a sacrifice to his praise and honor, that so self may be crucified and baptized into death, and the gifts made use of in the power of the resurrection of the life of Jesus in him. When this great work is wrought in a man, then all his gifts and qualifications are sanctified, and made use of for the good of the body which is the Church, and are as ornaments and jewels, which serve for the joy and comfort of all who are partakers of the same divine fellowship of life, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thus many come to be fitted and furnished to good works, which are brought forth in *their due seasons*, for edification and building up the



weak, and for repairing the decayed places, and also for defence of them that are feeble, that hurtful things may not come near them."

"It was a good saying, he that judgeth among men judgeth for the Lord, and he will repay it. Therefore let all be done as unto the Lord, and as ye are willing to answer it in his presence, and although some may for a time be discontented thereat, yet in time God shall clear up your innocency as the sun at noonday. They that kick at sound judgment will find hard work of it ; they do but kick against that which will prick them ; and however such through their wilfulness, and their abounding in their own sense, may hurt themselves, yet you will be preserved and enjoy your peace and satisfaction in the discharge of your consciences in the sight of God."

"Dearly beloved, keep upon your watch, keep on your spiritual armor, keep your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and the God of peace will be with you and crown your endeavors with good success, to your joy and comfort. He will bring his power over your adversaries and opposers, more and more, to which many shall bow and bend in your sight ; and will bring shame and confusion upon the rebellious, who harden their hearts and stiffen their necks, against the Lord, and his Christ and Kingdom, which he will exalt in the earth, notwithstanding all that Satan and his evil instruments can do, to hinder the growth and progress of his blessed truth ; for of the increase of the government and of the peace of the kingdom of Christ, there shall be *no end.*"



The following extracts from the writings of Robert Barclay, in which Church order and government are asserted, we deem appropriate to our present purpose.

"Some," says he, "are so great pretenders to inward motions and revelations of the spirit, that there are no extravagancies so wild, which they will not cloak with them ; and so much are they for every one's following their own mind, as can admit of no christian fellowship and community, nor of that good order and Discipline which the Church of Christ never was nor can be without. This gives an open door to all libertinism, and brings great reproach to the christian faith." He alludes to the other extreme of receiving the Scriptures as the only means through which God's will is manifested, and declares, that it is and hath been the work of Friends to avoid both of these extremes, "and to be found in that even and good path of the primitive Church, where all were (no doubt) led and acted by the Holy Spirit ; and might all have prophesied one by one ; and yet there was a subjection of the prophets to the spirits of the prophets. There was an authority some had in the Church, and yet it was for edification and not for destruction ; there was an obedience in the Lord to such as were set over, and a being taught by such, and yet a knowing of the inward anointing, by which each individual was to be led into all truth. The work and testimony the Lord hath given us is to restore this again, and to set both these in their right place, without causing *them to destroy one another.*"

“The ground of all schisms, divisions or rents in the body is, when as any member assumes another place than is allotted it ; or being gone from the life and unity of the body, and losing the sense of it, lets in the murmurer, the eye that watches for evil, and not in holy care over its fellow members ; and then instead of coming down to judgment in itself, will stand up and judge its fellow members, yea, the whole body, or those whom God has set in a more honorable and eminent place in the body than itself. Such suffer not the word of exhortation ; and term the reproofs of instruction, (which is the way of life,) imposition and oppression, and are not aware how far they are in the things they condemn others for ; while they spare not to reprove and revile all their fellow members ; yet if they be but admonished themselves, they cry out as if their great charter of gospel liberty were broken. Now, though such and the spirit by which they are acted, be sufficiently seen and felt by thousands, whose hearts God has so established, as they are out of danger of being entangled in that snare ; and who have power and strength in themselves to judge that spirit, even in its most subtle appearances ; yet there are who cannot so well withstand the subtlety and seeming sincerity some such pretend to, though in measure they have a sight of them, and others that cannot so rightly distinguish between the precious and the vile ; and some there are that, through weakness and want of true discerning, may be deceived, and the simplicity in them betrayed for a season, as it

is written, 'with fair speeches and smooth words they deceive the hearts of the simple.' "

"He hath not gathered us to be as sheep scattered without a shepherd, that every one may run his own way, and every one follow his own will, and so to be as a confused mass or chaos without any order ; but He, even the Lord, hath also gathered and is gathering us, into the good order, discipline and government of his own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ ; therefore He hath laid care upon some beyond others, who watch for the souls of their brethren as they that must give account."

He proceeds to describe a certain class that gave the Church trouble in his day, who, "not keeping low in their own habitations, but being puffed up and giving way to the restless imaginations of their exalted and wondering minds, fall out with their brethren ; cause divisions ; begin to find fault with every thing, and to look at others more than at themselves ; with swelling words to talk of, and preach up, a higher dispensation, while they are far from living up to the life and perfection of this present ; like unto such who said, 'we will not have this man to rule over us : ' cry out of formality and apostacy, because they are not followed in all things ; and if they be reproved for their unruliness, according to the good order of the Church of Christ, then they cry out, 'breach of liberty, oppression, persecution ! we will have none of your order and government ; we are taught to follow the light in our consciences, and not the orders of men.' "

After fully establishing, from Scripture, that "Christ did appoint and ordain that there should be order and government in the Church, and that any one refusing to hear the judgment of the Church, or whole Assembly, he doth thereby exclude himself, and shut out himself from being a member, and is justly judged by his brethren as an heathen and a publican," Robert Barclay proceeds :

"The Church, gathering or assembly of God's people, has power to examine and call to account such as appearing to be among them, or owning the same faith with them, do transgress ; and in case of their refusing to hear or repent, to exclude them from their fellowship ; and that God hath a special regard to the judgment and sense of his people thus orderly proceeding, so as to hold such bound in heaven, whom they bind on earth, and such loosed in heaven whom they loose on earth ; and if there should be any so unreasonable as to deny it, I could prove it by inevitable consequences ; which at present, as taking it for granted, I forbear to do. If it be reckoned so great a crime to offend one of the little ones, that it were better for him than so to do, that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea ; without question, to offend and gainsay the whole flock, must be more criminal, and must draw after it a far deeper judgment."

"And seeing in case of difference the Lord hath and doth and will reveal his will to his people ; and

hath and doth raise up members of his body, to whom he gives a discerning, and power, and authority, to instruct, reprove, yea, and command, in some cases, those that are faithful and low in their minds, keeping their own places and minding the Lord, and the interest and good of his truth in the general over all, shut out the murmurer ; and the Spirit of God leads them to have unity, and concur with their brethren. But such as are heady and high-minded, are inwardly vexed that any should lead or rule but themselves ; and so it is the high thing in themselves that leads them to quarrel with others for taking so much upon them ; pretending a liberty, not sinking down in the seed, to be willing to be of no reputation for its sake. Such, rather than give up their own wills, will study to make rents and divisions, not sparing the flock—but protrating the reputation and honor of the truth even to the world.” After various Scripture quotations he cites 2d Thessa. iii : 40—“And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do, and will do the things which we command you”—verse 6 : “Now we command you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” What more positive than this ? And yet the apostle was not here any imposer. And yet further, verse 14 : “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.” Thus, Heb.

xiii, 7: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation"—verse 17: "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you."

"I might at length enlarge, (continues Barclay,) if needful, upon these passages, any of which is sufficient to prove the matter in hand, but that what is said may satisfy such as are not wilfully blind and obstinate. For there can be nothing more plain from these testimonies than that the ancient apostles and primitive christians practiced order and government in the Church; that some did appoint and ordain certain things, condemn and approve certain practices, as well as doctrines by the Spirit of God; that there lay an obligation in point of duty upon others to obey and submit; that this was no encroachment nor imposition upon their christian liberty, nor any ways contradictory to their being inwardly and immediately led by the Spirit of God in their hearts; and lastly, that such as are in the true feeling and sense, will find it in their places to obey and be one with the Church of Christ in such like cases; and that it is such as have lost their sense and feeling of the life of the body, that dissent and are disobedient, under the false pretence of liberty."



Robert Barclay, in the course of the instructive work from which we are quoting, all of which may be profitably read, fails not to condemn such as claiming the privilege of immediate revelation, say, "That they, being moved to do such and such things, though contrary to the mind and sense of the brethren, are not to be judged for it, (they) adding, why may it not be so that God hath moved them to it?" Now, if this be a sufficient reason (says he,) for them to suppose as to *one* or *two*, I may without absurdity suppose it as well to the *whole body*." He declares, "that ordinarily God hath, in the communicating of his will under his gospel, employed such whom he had made use of in the gathering of his Church, and in feeding and watching over them, though not excluding others;" and goes on to say, "And indeed I mind not where, under the Gospel, Christ hath used any other method; but that he always, in revealing his will, hath made use of such as he himself had before appointed elders and officers in his church; though it be far from us to limit the Lord, so as to exclude any from this privilege; nor yet on the other hand, will the possibility hereof be a sufficient warrant to allow every obscure member to stand up, and offer to rule, judge and condemn the whole body; nor yet is it without cause, that such an one's message is jealousied and called in question, unless it have very great evidence, and be bottomed upon some very weighty and solid foundation."



From William Penn's "Brief Examination and State of Liberty Spiritual," we make the following extracts. He commences:—"Dear Friends and Brethren, it hath of long time rested with some pressure upon my spirit, for Zion's sake and the peace of Jerusalem, to write something of the nature of true spiritual liberty. Liberty, one of the most glorious words and things in the world, but little understood, and frequently abused by many. I beseech Almighty God to preserve you his people, in the right knowledge and use of that liberty, which Jesus Christ the Captain of our salvation, hath purchased for us and is redeeming us into." He queries—"But must I conform to things whether I can receive them or not? Ought I not to be left to the grace and spirit of God in my own heart?" This he fully answers and says:—"It is a dangerous principle and pernicious to true religion, and which is worse, it is the root of Ranterism to assert, that nothing is a duty incumbent upon thee, but what thou art persuaded is thy duty; for the *seared* conscience pleads his liberty against all duty, the *dark* conscience is here unconcerned, the *dead* conscience is here uncondemned. As to the second part of the question—"Ought I not to be left to the grace of God in my own heart?" he answers—"That is of all things the most desirable, since they are well left, that *are* there left, for there is no fear of want of unity; where all are left with the one spirit of truth, they must be of one mind, they cannot be otherwise; so that to plead this against unity, is to abuse the very

plea, and to commit the greatest contradiction to that very doctrine of Scripture, viz : "That all should be guided by the grace and spirit of God in themselves," for the end of that doctrine is certainty, "They shall all know me saith the Lord, from the least to the greatest, and I will give them one heart," &c. "Therefore I must say to thee, Friend, what if thou wilt not be left with the grace and spirit of God in thyself, nor wait for its mind, nor be watchful to its revelations, nor humble and quiet, till thou hast received such necessary manifestations; but pleadest against the counsel of the Spirit of the Lord in other faithful persons, under the pretence of being left to his Spirit in thyself; by which means, thou opposest the Spirit to the Spirit, and pleadest for disunity under the name of liberty."

"Since the Spirit of the Lord is one in all, it ought to be obeyed through another as well as in one's self; and this I affirm to you that the same lowly frame of mind that receives and answers the mind of the Spirit of the Lord in a man's self, will receive and have unity with the mind of the same Spirit through another; and the reason is plain; because the same self-evidencing power and virtue that ariseth from the measure of the spirit of truth in one's self, and that convinceth a man in his own heart, doth also attend the discovery of the mind of the same spirit when delivered by another; for the words of the "second Adam, the quickening spirit," through another are spirit and life, as well as in thy *own particular*; this is discerned by the spiritual

man that judgeth all things, although the carnal man pleadeth being left to his *freedom*, and it may be, talks of being left to the *spirit* in himself too ; the better to escape the sense and judgment of the spiritual man. It is my earnest desire that all that have any knowledge of the Lord, would have a tender care how they use that plea against their faithful brethren, that God put into their mouths against the persecuting priests and hirelings of the world, namely, 'I must mind the spirit of God in myself ;' for though it be a great truth that all are to be left thereunto yet it is as true, that he whose soul is left with the spirit of truth in himself, differs not from his brethren that are in the same spirit, and as true it is that those who err from the spirit of Truth, may plead being left to the *spirit* in *themselves*, against the motion and command of the spirit through another, when it pleaseth not his or her high mind and perverse will ; for a saying may be true or false according to the subject matter it is spoken upon or applied to ; we own the assertion—we deny the application—there lies the snare."

Query—"But though this be true, which hath been alleged for heavenly concord, yet what if I do not presently see that service in a thing that the rest of my brethren agree in ? In this case what is my duty and theirs ?

Answer—It is thy duty to wait upon God in *silence* and patience, out of all fleshly consultations ; and as thou abidest in the simplicity of the truth, thou wilt receive an understanding with the rest of

thy brethren about the thing doubted. And it is their duty, whilst thou behavest thyself in meekness and humility, to bear with thee, and carry themselves tenderly and lovingly towards thee ; but if on the contrary thou disturbest their godly care and practice, and growest contentious, and exaltest thy judgment against them, they have power from God to exhort, admonish and reprove thee ; and (if thou perseverest therein,) in his name to refuse any further fellowship with thee, till thou repentest of thy evil."

A little farther on, William Penn remarks: "This I affirm from the understanding I have received of God, not only that the enemy is at work to scatter the minds of Friends by that loose plea, 'What hast thou to do with me? Leave me to my freedom and the grace of God in myself;' and the like; but this proposition and expression as now understood and alleged, is a deviation from, and a perversion of, the ancient principle of Truth." After reasoning closely on the impropriety of an individual's urging the measure of his own light to justify him in courses and practices not approved by Friends, he goes on to say: "This is that very rock both professors and profane would long since have run us upon, namely, 'That a way is hereby opened to all the world's libertines, to plead the light within for their excesses;' which indeed grieves the Spirit of God, and was severely judged by our Friends in the beginning, and is still reprov'd by them that keep their habitation, though some are become as wandering stars,

through their own pride, and the prevalency of the hour of temptation that hath overtaken them; whereas had they kept in the channel of love and life, in the orb and order of the celestial power, they had shined as fixed stars in the firmament of God forever. And from the deep sense that I have of the working of the enemy of Zion's peace, to rend and divide the heritage of God, who under the pretence of crying down *man*, forms and prescriptions, is crying down the heavenly man Christ Jesus, His blessed order and government, which He hath brought forth, by His own revelation and power through His faithful witnesses, this I further testify, that the enemy by these fair pretences, strikes at the godly care and travail that dwell upon the spirits of many faithful brethren, that all things might be preserved sweet, comely, virtuous and of good report in the Church of God."

"And the Lord God of Heaven and Earth, that hath sent his son Christ Jesus a light into our hearts and consciences, to whose search and judgment all ought to (and must) bring their deeds, and render up their accounts, beareth holy record, that for this end hath he moved upon the spirits of his servants, and for this good end only have his servants given forth, recommended and put in practice, those things that are now in godly use among his people, whether in this or other nations, relating to men's and women's meetings, and their divers and weighty services. And further, in the fear of the Almighty God I shall add, that heavenly peace and prosperity *dwell with those who are found in an holy and zeal-*

ous practice of them ; wherefore I warn all, that they take heed of a slighting and obstinate mind, and that they have a care how they give way to the outcry of some falsely entitled, ' Liberty of conscience against imposition,' &c., for the end thereof is to lead back again and give ease to the carnal mind, which, at last, will bring death again upon the soul to God, and the living society of his children."

From an Epistle written by that experienced and worthy Elder in the Church, Joseph Pike, we make the following pertinent extract: "There are," says he, "and always will be, different degrees of growth in the members of the Church of Christ ;—yet, as all are growing in truth, and drawing one way, and aiming at the same thing, namely, the honor of the Lord and prosperity of his Holy Truth, there will be a general condescension and submission to one another ; but more especially to godly elders and overseers ; here the strong and self-will of man is kept out, and the unity of the spirit in an heavenly harmony maintained in those meetings, as well as among the whole body or Church of Christ."

We might continue our quotations from the writings of Friends much farther ; all showing the propriety and necessity of subordination and government in conducting the affairs of the Church, but we will conclude them by a paragraph from the writings of our friend, John Griffith: "None have a right to apprehend such a self-sufficiency as to be *independent of other members.*" "It likewise ap-



pears that every member entered as such, by his or her voluntary consent, is strictly bound to keep and maintain the established rules of that body; the breach of which not only renders him or her guilty in God's sight, but also accountable to the body.— It also behooves this body immediately upon the transgression of its rules and orders, to exert itself in dealing with transgressors, and to administer sound judgment in order to restore them; or on failure of success in that, to disown or refuse to have unity with such; and to let the world know they are not of their body."

And now, beloved Friends, in conclusion, we commend the Advices that we have revived to your serious attention, and solid consideration. May they be received by you in love and be carefully remembered, and prove as a caution to the inexperienced and self-confident, an incentive to the retiring and timid, and a strength and encouragement to those who, under a feeling of religious duty, are concerned to contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints and for the order of the Gospel. May the word of the Lord, through the mouth of His Prophet, be received by us all for our good. "Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Jer. ch. vi: 16.

Signed on behalf and by direction of a Meeting for Sufferings, held at Providence, the 3d of 3d month, 1840.

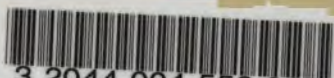
THOMAS HOWLAND, Clerk.











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